



WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL

Held Wednesday, January 14, 2004

For the purpose of reviewing two documents: 1) the Standing Rules of the City Council, and 2) the current draft of a voluntary agreement governing newspaper vending machines.

Mayor Davis called the meeting to order at 8:00 p.m. It was held in the Senior Classroom of the Community Center.

PRESENT WERE: Councilmembers Konrad E. Herling, Leta M. Mach, Rodney M. Roberts, and Mayor Judith F. Davis. Councilmember Edward V. J. Putens arrived at about 8:10 p.m.

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Michael P. McLaughlin, City Manager; Robert A. Manzi, City Solicitor; and Kathleen Gallagher, City Clerk.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Sheldon Goldberg, Advisory Planning Board.

Standing Rules

Council reviewed the Standing Rules document, including a number of proposed editorial changes. The agreed-upon revision will be brought to the next Council meeting.

There was discussion of recent events in other cities that had drawn attention to whether recall provisions were contained in municipal charters or not—either recall by voter referendum or removal by the elected body itself. Mr. Manzi recommended against any consideration of that type of provision and, as Ms. Mach pointed out, when the term of election is for only two years, the time frame makes a recall provision nearly superfluous.

Mayor Davis asked Mr. McLaughlin to develop a plan of action for quick communication with the police in the event of an emergency or threat within the Council Room.

Voluntary Agreement – Newspaper Vending Machines

Later in the meeting, it was explained that the purpose of this review was to be sure that the direction being taken was generally acceptable to Council, prior to the next meeting of mayors and city managers in Laurel on February 5.

Mr. Manzi explained that this was a draft of an agreement for potential use by quite a few participating municipalities, including Laurel, Greenbelt, College Park, New Carrollton, University Park, Bowie, Brentwood, and Annapolis. Hyattsville and Berwyn

Heights are not currently participating but would probably concur. He said Baltimore, Alexandria, and Rockville all have voluntary agreements with the papers, and he drew on these to develop the document for Laurel. He said the fallback would be to use legislation, but Laurel does not want to do that. Greenbelt introduced an ordinance for first reading about three years ago, without bringing it back for adoption. It was generally agreed that there had not been major problems in Greenbelt subsequent to the introduction of the ordinance and the work session held shortly thereafter with representatives of the newspapers.

Mr. Manzi also reminded Council that although newspapers have strong First Amendment protection, much of the problem with news rack proliferation is due to employment and real estate advertising newsletters.

The idea of using the kiosks or corrals that have been designed to clean up streetscapes by providing a standard enclosure to anchor the vending boxes was also mentioned. The Mayor said the corral vendors often have displays and literature at municipal conferences. Mr. Manzi said Prince George's County has contracted with one of these vendors.

Although Council raised questions about a number of the provisions (e.g., a requirement that boxes face away from the street), it supported the continued development of the instrument. Mr. Manzi said he hoped the February 5 meeting would result in authorization to proceed with setting up a meeting for all interested municipalities and the papers.

Other Business

Council agreed that any of the proposed dates for the mid-term legislative dinner (March 2, 10, or 11) would be acceptable.

Mr. Putens said he had received a circular from County Councilmember Douglas Peters enumerating his accomplishments for Greenbelt during his first 250 days. He said he would like staff to get a copy of what was sent to Bowie residents.

Mayor Davis reminded Council that there would be a memorial service for Mary Alice Carroll at Greenbriar on Saturday. She also reviewed some information on policies and practices for towing cars at Greenbriar.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Gallagher
City Clerk